

Kids Who Care



Life is often painful for 9-year-old Risha Shukla. But the young resident of Irvine, California, puts aside her own suffering to bring a smile to other kids. Diagnosed six years ago with chronic pancreatitis, a rare disorder in children, Risha started the nonprofit Kids Who Care Foundation in 2004 to cheer up hospitalized children by sending them a “card quilt”—a paper mosaic of cheerful greetings and drawings. She received one from friends during a long hospital stay after surgery in March 2004. “It made me very happy and made my room colorful and cheerful. I wanted to do the same for other kids,” says Risha, who attends Brywood Elementary School.

Even though she has four other chron-

ic ailments that have no cure and at times spends days doubled up in pain, her mission keeps her going. She organizes card-making parties every three months with help from neighbors, her 7-year-old sister Rhea, and parents Chetan, born in Uganda, and Anisha, born in Mumbai. Kids make bright “Get well” wishes with stickers, glitter, drawings and jokes. Risha visits schools in the area to seek help in making cards and talks about her experiences to educate young people about chronic diseases. “Kids making quilt cards learn to be more compassionate to kids with diseases because they see whom they are helping,” she says.

The foundation has three programs: The Kids Who Care Club, which sends the

cards; My Journal, where parents of children in hospitals can share experiences on-line; and the Pancreatitis Support Group, an on-line forum.

The club has sent out more than 3,000 cards that were made into 165 card quilts. Requests are made on its Web site [<http://www.kidswhocareclub.org/>] from all over the United States and other countries.

Besides other recognition, Risha was chosen as “Hero Kid of the Year” by the Spirit of Giving program of the Mission Hospital in Orange County, California, this February. She also spoke on the benefits of volunteering by children at the National and Global Youth Service Day banquet at the University of California, Irvine, in April.

—D.K.

Above: Risha (left) with sister Rhea. Right: Students of Linda Vista Elementary School, Mission Viejo, California, get together to draw cards.



Courtesy KIDS WHO CARE FOUNDATION